

A Sufi's Paradise and Hell:
'Azīz-i Nasafī's (fl. mid-7th/13th c.) Epistle on the Otherworld
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[In: Alireza Korangy and Dan Sheffield (eds.), *No Tapping Around Philology: Festschrift Wheeler Thackston* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), pp. 193-214. Number in bold square brackets refer to the published version.]

[p. 193] One can distinguish between at least six different modes of viewing the afterworld (*al-ākhirā*) in the ascetic and mystical tradition of Islam. The first two originate in the early Islamic milieu of renunciatory piety (*zuhd*), whose adherents rejected the present world and focused on the life to come. Fear (*khawf*) of punishment in hell dominated the thought of one group of these renunciants (*zuhhād*), scrupulously pious men and women who, as the sources tell us, behaved as if “God’s threats only apply to them, while His promises are only for others.”¹ The Basran renunciant ‘Aṭā’ al-Salīmī (d. after 140/757), for example, was transfixed by the idea of hell. As his biographers remembered him, “he never prayed for paradise, and if someone mentioned paradise to him, he would say: ‘I ask God for forgiveness!’”² Several of these figures allegedly wept, fainted, or even died on the spot when passing the forge of a blacksmith’s shop, overwhelmed by the violent spectre of hellfire that constantly occupied their minds.³

The second *zuhd* mode of conceiving the otherworld was to turn away from the world toward paradise, and to nurture in oneself the hope (*rajā’*) and longing (*shawq*) for the bliss that was in store in the postmortem abode. For example, al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), a Basran ascetic and student of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī who settled in Dārāyā near Damascus,⁴ opined that too much fear induces people to despair of God, which he thought was a grave sin, or even a form of unbelief.⁵ Al-Dārānī had frequent visions of the houris in paradise,⁶ which [p. 194] however seems to have caused him a bad conscience. Lest he appear too indulgent, he developed a habit of calculating the number of virgins awaiting him in paradise by counting the tears and prayers in his earthly life.⁷

There was a “cold” and a “hot” response, corresponding to the third and fourth of the six modes of Sufi eschatology, to the renunciants’ fixation on paradise and hell. According to the former, the preoccupation with paradise and hell is first and foremost an intellectual problem: it detracts too much attention from what lies behind the pleasures and the

¹ Kalābādhī, K. *al-Ta’arruf*, tr. A. Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Sūfīs* (1935; New York: AMS, 1976), 38. See also al-Sha’rānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Cairo, 1299/1881-82), 1:31-32. A famous example of this attitude

² Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1351-57/1932-38), 6:217-18. Cf. Richard Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums. Erster Teil: Scheiche des Westens* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 127-29, with more stories about ‘Aṭā’s fear of hell and the resulting “Daseinsverdrossenheit.”

³ Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥ. al-Jum’a and M. al-Laḥīdān (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd Nāshirūn, 1424/2004), 12:371, 12:425; Ibn Ḥanbal, K. *al-Zuhd* (1357; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1396/1976), 160. See Christopher Melchert, “Exaggerated Fear in the Early Islamic Renunciant Tradition,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3*, 21, no. 3 (2011): 287n22 (with more references).

⁴ On al-Dārānī and his circle, cf. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 36-39; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991-97), 1:142-43.

⁵ Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, tr. R. A. Nicholson, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise of Sufism* (Leiden: Brill, 1911), 112-13.

⁶ Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 9:259.

⁷ Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane: Nouvelle édition revue et considérablement augmentée* (1922; Paris: J. Vrin, 1954), 219-20. According to Massignon, al-Dārānī’s attempt to reconcile theological orthodoxy with asceticism was appreciated neither by the *mutakallimūn* nor by later Sufis: al-Muḥāsibī and al-Bisṭāmī both criticized the idea. Toward the end of his life, however, al-Dārānī is supposed to have taught that the thought of paradise should not divert one’s attention from God. See Abū Nu’aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, 9:270.

punishments in the world to come, that is, from God Himself.⁸ The physicality of paradise and hell was not usually called into question by thinkers in this tradition. Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), to name two famous examples, wrote at length about the sensual delights experienced in the Garden and the brutal torments suffered in the Fire; but their works both end with the assertion that the highest, indeed the only true pleasure in paradise is the company and the vision of God, while the worst pain in hell is the feeling of distance from God.⁹

The “hot” response to the fixation on paradise and hell of the earlier authorities took the form of a kind of *contemptus ultramundi*, the rejection or even abhorrence of paradise and hell as obstacles that obstruct the Sufi from access to the Beloved. For example, according to Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), paradise, “the greatest veil,” is only for the “ignorant,” or “a game for children.”¹⁰ When the Sufis, at Resurrection, see paradise, they will cry out in horror, like the sinners in hell who writhe in pain.¹¹ As for hell, the Baghdad ecstatic al-Shiblī (d. 334/945) remarked, full of contempt, that the truly pious could extinguish the Fire if they spat on it.¹² A similar feeling of superiority over hell is voiced by the enigmatic figure of al-Niffarī (d. 350/961 or around 366/977), who proclaimed that the Sufis are encouraged by God “to enter the Fire, because then the Fire will be extinguished.”¹³ Here, the Sufis’ willingness to enter hell becomes the hallmark of their [p. 195] election: while paradise will only be populated by “slaves,” the “truly free,” al-Niffarī states, are in hell.¹⁴

The fifth and sixth mode of Sufi eschatology can loosely be characterized as monist. Both modes have roots in the early centuries of Islam—figures that come to mind are the Egyptian Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/860), famous for singing the praise of nature’s bearing “testimony” (*shahāda*) to God,¹⁵ and the Iraqi al-Nūrī (d. 295/907-8), who, in a grand simile, spoke of the heart of the faithful as the celestial garden within.¹⁶ However, such ideas only came to flourish and to be fully developed within the framework of the monism of figures such as Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240) and Rūmī (d. 672/1273), both of whom, it should be noted, were careful to distance themselves from accusations of immanentism (*ḥulūl*) and rejected a monism based on the idea of a substantial unity of God and creation. Thinkers in this tradition regularly distinguished between a “compulsory return” (*al-rujū‘ al-iḍṭirārī*) and a “voluntary return” (*al-rujū‘ al-ikhtiyārī*) to the otherworld, the former taking place in the macrocosm, that is, after death and resurrection, the latter as a spiritual journey into the self: the discovery of the paradise and hell within.¹⁷

In macrocosmic terms, these Sufi authors conceived of an otherworld that, though

⁸ See Soubhi El-Saleh, *La vie future selon le Coran* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1971), 97.

⁹ Muḥāsibī, K. *al-Tawahhum*, ed. and tr. A. Roman, *Une vision humaine des fins dernières* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978); Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), part tr. T. Winter, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife: Book XL of The Revival of the Religious Sciences* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989).

¹⁰ Quoted in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya: Juz’ 1: Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1949), 22.

¹¹ Hellmut Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele. Mensch, Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Farīduddīn ‘Aṭṭār* (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 523. Similarly already in al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘azīm*, tr. A. Keeler (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2011), 120 (ad Q19:61: the blessed cry out as soon as they are “veiled” from God, and be it only for the “twinkling of an eye”).

¹² Sarrāj, K. *al-Luma’*, tr. R. Gramlich, *Schlaglichter über das Sufitum* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1990), 548.

¹³ Niffarī, *al-Mawāqif wa-l-mukhāṭabāt*, ed. and tr. A. J. Arberry, *The Mawāqif and Mukhāṭabāt of Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī* (London: Luzac., 1935), 81 (*Mawāqif* no. 50).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76 (*Mawāqif* no. 47).

¹⁵ See Annemarie Schimmel, “The Celestial Garden in Islam,” in *The Islamic Garden*, ed. E. B. MacDougall and R. Ettinghausen (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976), 24.

¹⁶ See Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse Coranique et langage mystique: nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1970), 325-30.

¹⁷ On *al-rujū‘ al-iḍṭirārī* and *al-rujū‘ al-ikhtiyārī*, cf. William Chittick, “Muslim Eschatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. J. L. Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 138.

located outside of the (sublunar) world, is reflected in nature, albeit distantly. For Rūmī (d. 672/1273), the natural world mirrors God's beauty and gentleness, but also His awe-inspiring, severe side. The seeing eye of the Sufi perceives both. Thus, the spring breeze and flower gardens on earth flow, as it were, from paradise, while their opposites, autumn desolation and winter bleakness, are a hellish "torture chamber" and reminder of "God's threat and intimidation."¹⁸

For theorists of the "voluntary return" to the otherworld, it is the human heart and soul that serve as the mirror of God's gentleness and severity. Paradise and hell can thus be experienced in the *forum internum* of the Sufi's psyche. This "myth of the microcosmic return," as Hodgson called it, postulates that "the cosmos is fulfilled through an individual's self-fulfillment."¹⁹ Spiritual perfection of the Sufi is construed in terms analogous to the ascent of the soul to paradise after death. Hence Rūmī's and other Sufis' repeated invocation of the *ḥadīth* that one must "die before you die."²⁰ The Sufis who achieve the highest rank of spiritual realization, in the words of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 654/1256), [p. 196] "have died a true death before the occurrence of material death . . . [t]hey reside in this world in outward appearance, but in reality they have transcended the eight paradises."²¹

An illustration of this sixth and last mode of Sufi eschatology is provided in *The Perfect Man* (*Insān-i kāmīl*) of 'Azīz-i Nasafī (fl. middle of 7th/13th century), a peripatetic Sufi master hailing from Khurāsān who was, like Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a member of the Kubrawiyya order. According to Landolt, 'Azīz-i Nasafī would have been the first to use the expression "Unity of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*),²² a pregnant phrase that is regularly ascribed to Ibn al-'Arabī, even though it does not originate in the work of the Andalusian master.²³ 'Azīz-i Nasafī is generally seen as a sophisticated thinker who not only helped to spread Ibn al-'Arabī's ideas to the eastern lands of Islam but also combined them with concepts rooted in Persian Sufism, as well as elements of Shī'ism.²⁴ He has, therefore, been the object of considerable scholarly interest.²⁵

As a token of my admiration and a nod to Wheeler Thackston's tireless efforts to render works of Oriental literature into English, I propose here an annotated translation of the twenty-second epistle (*risāla*) contained in Nasafī's *Insān-i kāmīl*. This epistle, which is devoted to paradise and hell, was transmitted not only as a part of the *Insān-i kāmīl*, but also separately, as is attested by a manuscript preserved in the collection of Leiden University

¹⁸ Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, ed. R. Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1925-40), 2:2959-60. Cf. the selected translations from various of Rūmī's works in William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 280-85 ("F. The Garden of Spring").

¹⁹ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), 2:226.

²⁰ Zamān Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihirān, 1334 sh./1955), 116 (no. 352).

²¹ Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'ibād min al-mabda' ilā l-ma'ād*, tr. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publication International, 1980), 375.

²² Hermann Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāšānī und Simnānī über Waḥdat al-Wuḡūd," in *Recherches en spiritualité iranienne. Recueil d'articles* (Tehran: Presses Universitaires d'Iran, 2005), 257.

²³ William Chittick, "Rūmī and Waḥdat al-Wujūd," in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rumi*, ed. A. Banani and G. Sabagh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 21.

²⁴ Landolt, "Briefwechsel," 247.

²⁵ For an overview, see Hermann Landolt's entry "Nasafī, 'Azīz b. Moḥammad" in the online *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater (published 20 July 2002). The fundamental study of Nasafī's life and works remains Fritz Meier, "Die Schriften des 'Azīz-i Nasafī," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52 (1953): 125-182, repr. in *Bausteine: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft. Band I*, ed. E. Glassen and G. Schubert (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992), 178-235. See also Meier, "Das Problem der Natur im esoterischen Monismus des Islam," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 14 (1946): 149-227. Other studies include: Hermann Landolt, "Le paradoxe de la 'Face de Dieu': 'Azīz-e Nasafī (VIIe/XIIIe siècle) et le 'monisme ésotérique' de l'islam," *Studia Iranica* 25 (1996): 163-92; Lloyd Ridgeon, *'Azīz Nasafī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998).

library.²⁶ My translation is based on the 1962 edition prepared by Molé,²⁷ though in a few instances (see notes 30, 35, 41, 48, and 56) I have amended the text based on a comparison with the Leiden manuscript. I have also consulted the French translation of Isabelle de Gastines,²⁸ which I have found to be both elegant and reliable, but sometimes [p. 197] overly generous: it skips some details of the original text and, in one or two places, omits full sentences or lines of poetry. I also provide a short commentary, in smaller script, after each of the main sections of the text. In the footnotes, I trace Qur'ānic and other Arabic quotations (which appear in small capitals in the translation) to their sources. Numbers in square brackets indicate the page numbers in the edition of Molé.

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‘Azīz-i Nasafī’s Epistle about paradise and hell

[294] IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE. PRAISE BE TO GOD, THE LORD OF ALL BEING. THE HEREAFTER [AL-‘ĀQĪBA] BELONGS TO THE GODFEARING.²⁹ PRAYERS AND PEACE BE UPON HIS PROPHETS AND FRIENDS, THE BEST OF HIS CREATION, AND UPON THEIR GOOD AND PURE KINSFOLK AND COMPANIONS.

NOW, thus speaks the meekest of the meek, the servant of the poor, ‘Azīz ibn-i Muḥammad-i Nasafī: A group from among the dervishes—MAY GOD MULTIPLY THEIR NUMBER!—submitted a request to this helpless one, [saying:] “You must compile a treatise about paradise and hell, in order to clarify what the true meaning [*ḥaqīqat*] is of paradise and hell, what the true meaning is of felicity and misery, how many paradises and hells there are, in which paradise Adam and Eve dwelt, and which tree [it was] they approached [and] on account of which they left paradise.”

I have answered their request, asking God Exalted for help and support, in order that He protect [me] from error and slips. VERILY HE CAN DO WHATEVER HE WISHES, AND DESERVES HUMILITY.

O dervish, once there was an “Adam” and an “Eve.” Their story is well-known. Presently, there is an “Adam” and an “Eve” in us, too. Some day, there will be a paradise and hell. This, too, is well-known. Presently, however, there is a paradise and hell in us as well. In this epistle, we will begin by discussing what is in us. We will discuss what is outside of us in a different epistle. I HAVE NO SUPPORT OTHER THAN GOD’S, I HAVE PUT MY TRUST IN HIM AND SEEK HIS COMPANY.

Nasafī’s introductory formula in Arabic is repeated at the beginning of each of the epistles contained in the *Insān-i kāmīl*. It includes blessings for the “kinsfolk” of the prophets, which may indicate Nasafī’s Shī‘ī/Ismā‘īlī leanings,³⁰ as well as the designation of the Sufis, the “Friends of God” (*awliyā’ Allāh*), as “the best of God’s creation” (*khayru khalqihī*). In the standard (Sunnī) collections of *ḥadīth*, this epithet is reserved for the Prophet Muḥammad alone.³¹ That Nasafī, as he claims, is prompted by “a group of dervishes” to write this epistle is a trope that occurs at the beginning of almost all the other chapters of the *Insān-i kāmīl*. It serves him to introduce the questions that he sets out to

²⁶ Leiden MS Or. 778, dated Ramaḍān 1008/March-April 1600, copied by a certain Muḥammad b. Rustum “in the fortress of Ayinachak” (in the Caucasus?). See Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden* (Leiden: Ter Lugt, 2006-07), 1:326.

²⁷ ‘Azīz-i Nasafī, *Kitāb al-insān al-kāmīl*, ed. M. Molé (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Taban, 1962): 294-309.

²⁸ *Recueil de traités de soufisme connu sous le titre Le livre de l’homme parfait* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), 237-51. Short passages from this epistle are also translated by Ridgeon, ‘Azīz Nasafī, and by Reza Hajatpour, “Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Paradies. Die Idee der Perfektibilität im Islam,” in *Sehnsucht nach dem Paradies. Paradiesvorstellungen in Judentum, Christentum, Manichäismus und Islam*, ed. J. Tubach, A. Drost-Abgarjan, and S. Vashalomidze (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 159-70.

²⁹ A combination of Qur’ān 1:1-2 and 7:128. Verses from the Qur’ān are quoted according to the translation of Arthur Arberry (1955), with minor modifications.

³⁰ Cf. Landolt, “Nasafī, ‘Azīz Moḥammad.” Critical of the idea is Ridgeon, *Azīz Nasafī*, 190-95.

³¹ See, for example, Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo: Mu’assasat Qurṭuba, n.d.), 1:210.

answer. Nasafī carefully delimits the scope of his epistle: he excludes macrocosmic [p. 198] eschatology from his agenda, focussing instead on the “voluntary return”: paradise and hell as realities that lie within the human being. A (short) discussion of the macrocosmic paradise and hell is offered in the fifth epistle (*risāla*) of Nasafī’s *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, entitled *al-Mabda’ wa-l-ma’ād* (“The Beginning and the End”).³² The fifth epistle in Nasafī’s *Kashf* also includes allegorical interpretations of the Qur’ānic picture of paradise and hell (the nineteen angels set over hell, the four rivers in paradise and the four rivers in hell, the tree of Ṭūba in paradise and the tree of Zaqqūm in hell, the houris in paradise, etc.), as well as a lengthy discussion of philosophical interpretations of the otherworld.

[295] Know—MAY GOD FORTIFY YOU IN THE TWO ABODES!—that the true meaning of paradise is that it is harmony [*muwāfaqat*], while the true meaning of hell is that it is antagonism [*mukhālafat*]. The true meaning of felicity is finding what is sought [*yāftan-i murād*], while the true meaning of misery is not finding what is sought. If someone else has used, or uses, different words, the meaning is the same that we have noted.

Now that you have learned what is the true meaning of paradise and hell, know that paradise and hell have many gates. All the approved words and deeds and all the praiseworthy manners are the gates of paradise. All the disapproved words and deeds and all the blameworthy manners are the gates of hell. This means that every affliction and misery that befalls man results from disapproved words and deeds and from blameworthy manners. Every moment of ease and happiness that a man encounters results from approved words and deeds and from praiseworthy manners.

Nasafī’s definition psychologizes paradise and hell along the lines of Ibn al-‘Arabī, who states that “felicity is nothing but the agreeable, and chastisement is nothing but the disagreeable.”³³ The (implied) notion that ultimate happiness is relative—spiritual for some, corporeal for others—goes back to Ibn Sīna’s (d. 428/1037) philosophical eschatology. “Pleasure,” states Ibn Sīna, “is to attain that which is compatible [*idrāk al-mulā’im*].”³⁴ In the context of his teachings about the macrocosmic paradise and hell, this leads Ibn al-‘Arabī to affirm that the inhabitants of hell, after receiving a temporary punishment, will experience well-being (*na’im*) in the Fire, while they would suffer from being allowed into paradise, for this would not agree with their soul’s constitution (*mizāj*).³⁵ The idea that the gates of paradise and hell correspond to specific virtuous and sinful actions is found in the *ḥadīth*, where prayer, fasting, charity, *jihād*, etc., are the gates of paradise.³⁶ The *murād*, according to many Sufi authors, is the name of the spiritually advanced person, [p. 199] usually the shaykh of the *murīd* (“seeker”), who has overcome his own will (*irāda*) to the extent that he has himself become “that which is sought.”³⁷

Know that some say that there are seven gates of hell while there are eight gates of paradise. This opinion is correct because there are eight human faculties of perception, that is, human discernment is according to eight parts: five external senses, imagination [*khayāl*], fancy [*wahm*], and reason [*‘aql*]. Everything that man discerns and discovers is through these gates.³⁸ Whenever reason does not control the [other] seven [faculties], and when these seven [faculties] function without the command of reason, [that is,] when they are [296] under the command of nature [*ṭabī‘at*], they are the seven gates of hell. When

³² See Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, MS Nuru Osmaniye 4899, fol. 220b-314a, at fol. 290a ff. = tr. F. Meier (Nachlass Basel University, D 2.17.16: *Kašf al-ḥaqā’iq*), 157ff.

³³ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 4:14,34.

³⁴ See Ibn Sīna, *al-Mabda’ wa-l-ma’ād*, ed. ‘A. Nūrānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mu’assasa-yi Muṭāla‘āt-i Islāmī, 1984), 110.

³⁵ See William Chittick, “Death and the World of Imagination: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Eschatology,” *The Muslim World* 78 (1988): 79-80.

³⁶ See, for example, al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. M. Dīb al-Bughā (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1407/1987), 2:671.

³⁷ See the examples cited in Rafīq al-‘Ajam, *Mawsū‘at muṣṭalaḥāt al-taṣawwuf al-islāmī* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1999), 867-68.

³⁸ The edition by Molé (295.20) reads *az īn panj darhā* (“through these five gates”), but I prefer to read *az īn darhā*, with MS Leiden f. 128b ult.

reason is manifest and becomes the master [*hākīm*] over these seven [faculties], and when these seven [faculties] submit to the command of reason, all eight become the gates of paradise. Therefore, all of mankind first pass over hell, and then they reach paradise. Some [however] remain in hell and cannot pass beyond hell, while others pass beyond hell and arrive in paradise.³⁹ NOT ONE OF YOU THERE IS, BUT HE SHALL GO DOWN TO IT; THAT FOR YOUR LORD IS A THING DECREED, DETERMINED. THEN WE SHALL DELIVER THOSE THAT WERE GODFEARING; AND THE EVILDOERS WE SHALL LEAVE THERE, HOBBLING ON THEIR KNEES.⁴⁰ O dervish, most humans remain in hell and cannot pass beyond hell. WE HAVE CREATED FOR GEHENNA MANY JINN AND MEN; THEY HAVE HEARTS, BUT UNDERSTAND NOT WITH THEM; THEY HAVE EYES, BUT PERCEIVE NOT WITH THEM; THEY HAVE EARS, BUT THEY HEAR NOT WITH THEM. THEY ARE LIKE CATTLE; NAY, RATHER THEY ARE FURTHER ASTRAY. THOSE—THEY ARE THE HEEDLESS.⁴¹

O dervish, this is what others have said before us about the meaning of paradise and hell. Now, know that hell and paradise have stages [*marātib*]. The complete trajectory of the wayfarer [*rāh-i sālik*] leads over these paradises and hells. The paradise and hell of the simpletons are different from those of the possessors of reason or those of lovers. The hell of simpletons is “antagonism,” their paradise is “harmony.” The hell of the possessors of reason is “necessity” [*bāyist*], their paradise is “abandonment” [*tark*]. The hell of lovers is “veiling,” their paradise is “unveiling.”

In the *ḥadīth*, the eight gates of paradise are often contrasted with the seven gates of hell.⁴² Sufi authors such as Rūmī find here an illustration of the famous *ḥadīth qudsī* that “My mercy outweighs my wrath.”⁴³ Al-Ghazālī notes that there are eight virtues, and hence [p. 200] eight gates of paradise, as opposed to the seven cardinal sins.⁴⁴ In Nasafī’s take on the theme, the eight gates become man’s outer and inner faculties of perception.⁴⁵ Nasafī, at first, seems to insist that the use of reason (*‘aql*) is indispensable if one wishes to “pass beyond hell.” He notes, however, that this is what “others have said” before him. He then proceeds to describe the paradises of classes of people who do not possess reason (the “simpletons,” *‘ābāḥān*), or indeed those who have left reason behind (the “lovers,” *‘āshiqān*; cf. the following section). The former experience bliss and misery in as much as their circumstances are in harmony with their natural temperament (*mizāj*); the latter define felicity purely in terms of the level of nearness they have achieved to God. It may be that Nasafī identifies the inhabitants of the intermediary paradise (the “possessors” of reason,” *‘āqilān*) with “those who have submission,” that is, the *‘ulamā’*, the followers of the Islamic system of normativity (*sharī‘a*).⁴⁶ Nasafī seems to be saying that their paradise consists in “abandoning” (*tark*) the prohibitions to which they submitted during the earthly lives. As an example, one might mention wine, which the inhabitants of paradise, according to the Qur’ān (83:26 and *passim*), will be allowed to enjoy whereas they are prohibited from consuming it in this world. Paradise on earth (but not in the hereafter), in the sense of *al-rujū‘ al-ikhtiyārī*, would therefore seem possible for the Sufis alone.

[297] O dervish, love [*‘ishq*] is a fire that befalls the wayfarer’s heart. In one instance, it annihilates the external motives and inner thoughts of the wayfarer, which together are the idols of the ego [*naḥs*] and the veil covering the wayfarer’s path, so that he becomes a wayfarer without *qibla* and idol, pure, unadulterated and detached. GOD IS ALONE AND HE LOVES THOSE WHO ARE ALONE.⁴⁷

³⁹ My translation follows, with minor differences, the one proposed by Ridgeon, ‘Azīz Nasafī, 112.

⁴⁰ Qur’ān 19:71-72.

⁴¹ Qur’ān 7:179.

⁴² See Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ṣīfat al-janna*, ed. ‘A. R. ‘Abdallāh (Damascus-Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘mūn li-l-Turāth, 1406/1986), 2:18.

⁴³ See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1166. Cf. Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*, no. 64.

⁴⁴ See al-Ghazālī, *Ḥyā‘ ulūm al-dīn*, tr. Winter, *Remembrance*, 235.

⁴⁵ The same argument occurs in Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā‘iq*, fol. 292a.

⁴⁶ See Nasafī, *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, ed. H. Rabbānī, *apud* Jāmī, *Ashī‘at al-lama‘āt* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi ‘Ilmiyya-yi Ḥamīdī, 1973), 213.

⁴⁷ *Allāhu fard yuḥibbu l-fard*. See al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-‘ummāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1409/1989), 8:184. Also in Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī al-Burūsawī, *Rūḥ al-bayān*, ed. ‘A. Ḥ. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003), 2:47.

O dervish, love is the staff of Moses, and the world is the sorcerer. It [the world] is constantly engaged in sorcery, that is, it constantly plays tricks of illusion [*khayāl-bāzī mī-kunād*]. People are deceived by the illusion tricks of the world. Love opens its mouth to the world, and in one gulp, it swallows up all that there is in it. It makes the wayfarer pure, unadulterated and detached. Now the wayfarer acquires the name “Sufi.”⁴⁸ For, until now, he was not a Sufi because he was not unadulterated [*ṣāfi*]. When he became unadulterated, he turned into a Sufi.

O dervish, how many stations must a wayfarer put behind before he reaches the station of Sufism [*maqām-i taṣawwūf*] and may be called a Sufi! And how many stations must a Sufi put behind before he reaches the station of gnosis [*maʿrifat*] and may be called a gnostic [*ʿārif*]! And how many stations must a gnostic put behind before he reaches the station of friendship [with God] [*wilāyat*] and may be called a Friend [*walī*]! The station of Sufism is a lofty station indeed. Few among the wayfarers reach the station of Sufism. The station of Sufism is the outer boundary [*sarḥadd*] of [the station of] friendship.

[p. 201] O dervish, as long as he has not reached the level of love, reason is the staff of the wayfarer. It makes the wayfarer’s world habitable, and it provides the wayfarer with the means to run his worldly affairs. HE SAID: “THIS IS MY STAFF, WHEREON I LEAN AND WHEREWITH I BEAT DOWN BRANCHES FOR MY SHEEP, AND [298] WHEREIN I FIND OTHER USES.”⁴⁹ It is because it [reason] busies itself with worldly affairs that it does not have life [*jān*]. Love animates reason, and reason without love is without life, a dead thing. On account of this, that dear friend [of mine] [*ān ʿazīz*] has composed [this] verse:

If there be no reason [*dil*], where will love build its home?
If there be no love, what shall reason accomplish?

O dervish, when the wayfarer is exhorted by God to “cast away reason” this means: “[Your] reason is focused on the world, and it is feared that it will destroy you! Shift its focus away [from the world], toward Us!” [In the beginning] the wayfarer cannot cast reason away, because it is love that drives out reason and shifts its focus away [from the world]. In the beginning, however, the wayfarer does not possess love. However, when the wayfarer reaches the level of love, he casts away reason. When he casts [it] away he sees that reason is a serpent, and he becomes afraid. For [now] the wayfarer fears that it will destroy him.

O dervish, IT IS THROUGH THEIR OPPOSITE THAT THINGS BECOME CLEAR.⁵⁰ Before the light of God appears, it is impossible to know the darkness of the world. All those who trawl the world and remain attached to its pleasures and desires will perish. HE CAST IT DOWN, AND BEHOLD IT WAS A SERPENT SLIDING. HE SAID: “TAKE IT, AND FEAR NOT; WE WILL RESTORE IT TO ITS FIRST STATE.”⁵¹ That is, when you recognize reason in the form of a serpent, grasp it and fear not, for we will turn it back again into a staff. Until now he may have been busied with worldly affairs, but now his focus is turned onto the Lord. Nay, the world, which [until] now used to bewitch [you], hold you back from the path and command you to serve her, now becomes your servant and your helper on the path of God. [299] THEY SAID, “WE BELIEVE IN THE LORD OF ALL BEING.”⁵²

O dervish, all creatures declined and did not accept the safety [*imānat*] that was offered to them. However, man accepted it. This safety is love. Had man known that love is a difficult thing and a great trial, he would never have accepted it. SURELY HE IS SINFUL, VERY

⁴⁸ I prefer the MS Leiden: *nām-i ṣūfi* over ed. Molé: *nām-i ṣāfi*.

⁴⁹ Qurʾān 20:18.

⁵⁰ A well-known adage that is quoted, inter alia, by Rūmī, *Fīhi mā fīhi*, tr. A. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London: J. Murray, 1961), 138. Rumi states that God has created the world of darkness so that His light could become manifest.

⁵¹ Qurʾān 20:20-21.

⁵² Qurʾān 7:121.

FOOLISH.⁵³ This speech has become long and we have veered far away from what we set out to do. Our aim was to discuss paradise and hell.

[p. 202] This section explores the relationship between reason and love on the basis of a mystical exegesis (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'ānic account of the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh. Several of the motifs in this section appear in the *Diwān-i kabīr* of Rumi: "Love is Moses who slays the Pharaoh of existence by means of his miraculous rod";⁵⁴ reason is a lame donkey, while love is the winged Burāq, which carried the Prophet Muḥammad into God's presence;⁵⁵ reason is not a bad thing in itself, rather it is a stick for the blind who, *faute de mieux*, take it to be their prayer-direction;⁵⁶ love is not made for the weak; it is the occupation of heroes.⁵⁷ By contrast, Nasafī's musings seem less close to the noetic terms in which Ibn al-'Arabī couches Moses's encounter with Pharaoh in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*: here, it is not love, but "unveiling and certainty [*al-kashf wa-l-yaqīn*]" that triumph over Pharaoh's limited intellect.⁵⁸ In the remainder of his epistle, however, Nasafī no longer dwells on love but instead turns his attention to Sufi epistemology. The "dear friend" on whose authority Nasafī quotes the hemistich (which also appears in the seventh epistle of the *Insān-i kāmīl*, on p. 116 of Molé's edition) may well be his revered teacher Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammūya/Ḥamawī (d. 650/1253), a student of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221).⁵⁹ However, the poem, which seems relatively well known, is also attributed to Abū Sa'īd b. Abī l-Khayr (d. 440/1049). I owe clarification on this point to Hermann Landolt, Basel.

Know that there are seven hells and eight paradises. Every paradise is situated opposite a hell, with the exception of the first paradise, which has no hell opposite it. Each of the other seven paradises has a hell opposite it. This is because first come the noncompound entities [*mufradāt*], then the compound ones [*murakkabāt*]. Noncompound entities are what they are. They do not develop or progress. They do not have sense perception or knowledge, neither pain nor pleasure, for these things are the result of mixing [*tābi'-i mizāj-and*], and there is no mixing in noncompound entities, while it is there in compound things.

The first paradise had no hell opposite it. Adam and Eve were in it in the beginning. Because there were no "existence" or "opposites" [*aḍḍād*] in this paradise, there was no Satan to oppose them. Both were brought out from this first paradise by the divine command "Be!" and they descended from the heaven of non-existence to the earth of existence. Adam was told: "Inhabit this second paradise, in which there are noncompound entities, for there is no hunger, thirst [300] or nakedness in it; neither will you suffer from heat or cold. But do not approach the tree of compoundedness [*dirakht-i mizāj*]. For if you approach the tree of compoundedness, you must [p. 203] leave this second paradise. When you leave this second paradise,⁶⁰ you will become miserable, that is, you shall become needy, because hunger and thirst will appear and because you will be naked. O ADAM! SURELY THIS [SATAN] IS AN ENEMY TO YOU AND YOUR WIFE. SO LET HIM NOT EXPEL YOU BOTH FROM THE GARDEN, SO THAT YOU ARE UNPROSPEROUS. IT IS ASSUREDLY GIVEN TO YOU NEITHER TO HUNGER THEREIN, NOR TO GO NAKED, NEITHER TO THIRST THEREIN, NOR TO SUFFER THE SUN. THEN SATAN WHISPERED TO HIM.⁶¹ They approached the tree of compoundedness, and they were told: GET YOU DOWN, EACH OF

⁵³ Qur'ān 33:72.

⁵⁴ Rūmī, *Kulliyāt-i Shams, yā Diwān-i kabīr*, ed. B. Furūzānfar (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tihirān, 1336-46 sh./1957-67), 4:211 (no. 1970). Also quoted in Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* (London: Fine Books, 1978), 336.

⁵⁵ Rūmī, *Kulliyāt*, 4:228 (no. 1997).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:4 (no. 1087).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:1 (no. 1082).

⁵⁸ See Ibn al-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Cairo: 'Isā al-Babī al-Ḥalabī, 1365/1946), 210. Translated by R. W. Austin as *The Bezels of Wisdom* (London: SPCK, 1980), 263.

⁵⁹ See Aḥmad Mahdavi-Dāmghānī in the notes to his edition of Nasafī's *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa-Nashr-i Kitāb, 1965), 240, quoting the opinion of Riḍā-Qulī-Khān Hidāyat.

⁶⁰ Molé's edition has *bihisht-i awwal*, but this makes no sense, as far as I can ascertain.

⁶¹ Qur'ān 20:117-20.

YOU AN ENEMY TO EACH.⁶²

All three [inhabitants] left the second paradise and entered the third paradise, and all three moved from the heaven of noncompound being [*āsmān-i tafrīd*] to the earth of compound being [*zamīn-i tarkīb*]. In this paradise they became needy and turned hungry, thirsty and naked. This third paradise is the paradise of the simpletons [*ablahān*] and of children. Again a divine address came: “O Adam, inhabit this third paradise, for in this third paradise are many blessings. There will be no prohibitions, you will not be called to account, neither will there be demands upon you [*barkhāst wa-darkhāst nīst*]. Eat as much and as many different things as you like, but do not approach the tree of reason. If you approach the tree of reason, you must leave this third paradise, and if you leave this third paradise, you shall become an evildoer [*zālim*]. “ADAM, DWELL YOU, AND YOUR WIFE, IN THE GARDEN, AND EAT THEREOF EASEFULLY WHERE YOU DESIRE; BUT DRAW NOT NIGH THIS TREE, LEST YOU BE EVILDOERS.” THEN SATAN CAUSED THEM TO SLIP THEREFROM AND BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THAT THEY WERE IN.⁶³ They approached the tree of reason and again, they were told: “GET YOU DOWN, EACH OF YOU AN ENEMY TO EACH. [301] IN THE EARTH A SOJOURN SHALL BE YOURS, AND ENJOYMENT FOR A TIME.”⁶⁴ All six [inhabitants] left the third paradise and entered the fourth paradise.

O dervish, they became evildoers because, had they not approached the tree of reason, they would not have become legally responsible [*mukallaf*], [the legal categories] “allowed” and “forbidden” would not have applied to them, they would not have been commanded [to do right] and forbidden [to do wrong], and there would have been no calling to account and no demands [placed upon them]. Whatever they said, did or ate, and however they spoke, acted or acquired food—they would not have been “evildoers.” [However,] when they approached the tree of reason, they became legally responsible, and commanding [good] and forbidding [wrong] applied. And [now,] since they do not obey the commands and avoid the forbidden things, they become evildoers.

O dervish, three people left the second paradise: Adam, Eve, and Satan. However, six people left the third paradise: Adam, Eve, Satan, Iblīs, the peacock, and the snake. Adam is spirit [*rūh*], Eve is body [*jism*], Iblīs is fancy [*wahm*], Satan is natural condition [*ṭabīʿat*], the peacock is desire [*shahwat*], and the snake is anger [*ghaḍab*]. When Adam approached the tree of reason, he left the third paradise and entered the fourth paradise. All angels prostrated before Adam, but Iblīs refused to prostrate himself. This means that all spiritual [p. 204] and physical powers became obedient to and executives [*farmān bardār*] of the spirit, with the exception of fancy, which did not become obedient to and executive of the spirit. — However much I try to prevent [this] speech from becoming long, as if against my will, it does.

This section continues in the vein of *taʿwīl*, this time of the Qurʾānic account of Adam and Eve’s fall. The passage describing the first paradise, in which there is neither existence nor opposition, is missing in the Leiden manuscript, which may explain the apparent confusion in the numbering of the various paradises (see note 60). The origin of mankind is the protological paradise, in which Adam and Eve existed in a premoral state, like children and the mentally impaired who, according to standard legal doctrine, are not considered *mukallafūn*, that is, bound by the commands and prohibitions of the revealed law, nor subject to the general ethical injunction to “command right and forbid wrong” (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*; cf. Qurʾān 3:110). The “paradise of simpletons and of children” corresponds to the first of the three paradise Ibn al-ʿArabī describes in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiya*, the “garden of election” (*jannat al-ikhtisāṣ*).⁶⁵ See, in comparison, the Prophetic *ḥadīth* according to which “most of the people of paradise are fools” (*akthar ahl al-janna al-bulh*),⁶⁶ a tradition which may well have arisen in the milieu of *contemptus ultramundi* (and is still used in this way in Aṭṭār’s *Muṣibatnāma*),⁶⁷ while losing its pejorative meaning in Ibn al-ʿArabī, Nasafi as well as in

⁶² Qurʾān 7:24.

⁶³ Qurʾān 2:35-36.

⁶⁴ Qurʾān 7:24.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:317,32-3.

⁶⁶ Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān*, ed. M. Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1410/1990), 2:57.

⁶⁷ See Ritter, *Meer*, 24.

Rūmī.⁶⁸ In the next, fourth paradise, six powers (*quwwathā*) dominate: a spiritual, corporal, and natural power (corresponding to Adam, Eve, and Satan); and the three powers of desire, anger, and fancy (corresponding to the peacock, the snake, and Iblīs). It is particularly the last of these six powers that creates problems. As Nasafī states earlier in the *Insān-i kāmīl*,⁶⁹ humans must learn to control both fancy (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl*) by use of their reason, for both can lead to pride, selfindulgence, envy, and disobedience.⁷⁰ Ibn al-‘Arabī “disassociates imagination deriving from simple individual mental representation [i.e., *wahm*] from that which links the spirit of the person to the superior worlds [i.e., *khayāl*]. Only this second imaginative faculty constitutes a genuine way knowledge and can become the setting for an authentic theophanic experience.”⁷¹

[302] Know that it has been said that there are eight paradises. Now, know that at the top [*dar awal*] of each paradise there is a tree, and every tree has a name. They call each paradise by its tree. The name of the first tree is “potential” [*imkān*]. The name of the [p. 205] second tree is “existence” [*wujūd*]. The name of the third tree is “compoundedness” [*mizāj*]. The name of the fourth tree is “reason” [*‘aql*]. The name of the fifth tree is “character” [*khuluq*]. The name of the sixth tree is “knowledge” [*‘ilm*]. The name of the seventh tree is “light” [*nūr*]. The name of the eighth tree is “encounter” [*liqā*].⁷² Unless the wayfarer reaches [the station of] the light of God, he does not reach [the station] of encountering [God].

Perhaps Your light is all the eye knows about You.
More clearly than [in] this light, You cannot be seen.

O dervish, virtue [*akhlāq-i nīk*] is a broad and excellent paradise, and sin [*akhlāq-i bad*] is a hell that is exceedingly narrow and miserable. However, the pleasure of virtue is like a drop in the ocean compared to the pleasure of rational knowledge and of gnosis [*‘ilm wa-ma‘rifat*]. The pleasure of rational intellection [*ladhdhat-i idrāk*] is an exquisite pleasure. [However,] in the same way in which the corporal desires and physical pleasures do not reach [the level of] the pleasure of rational intellection, [it still falls short because] it is an immense pleasure to understand and see the essence of things and the wisdom behind the essence of things as they really are, and to get to know oneself and one’s Protector [*parwardgār-i khud*].⁷³

In this manner, the higher the paradise, the more excellent, and the lower the hell, the more miserable. This is because the higher the paradise, the more comprehension [*dānish*] there is in it, and since there is more comprehension, [303] the paradise will, for that reason, be more excellent. In as much as man reaches higher levels, he becomes more comprehending. The demands placed on him increase and things become more difficult for him. They become more difficult [precisely] because he has become more comprehending. “I TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD, AND I FEAR [FOR] YOU BECAUSE OF IT!”⁷⁴ In measure with how

⁶⁸ Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, 1014.22: *bishtar-i aṣḥāb-i jannat ablah-and*.

⁶⁹ *Insān-i kāmīl*, 240-41.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 150. Cf. Ridgeon, ‘Azīz Nasafī, 91-97.

⁷¹ See Pierre Lory, “Wahm. 2. In mysticism,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1954-2009), 12:823a.

⁷² Cf. MS Leiden f. 131v, l. 9-12, where the names of the eight trees are given differently as “existence” (*wujūd*), “compoundedness” (*mizāj*), “reason” (*‘aql*), “cosmos” (*‘ālam*) [sic], “character” (*khuluq*), “love” (*‘ishq*), “witnessing” (*mushāhada*), and “eye-to-eye encounter” (*mu‘āyana*).

⁷³ Cf. al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1415/1994), 6:75: “Who knows himself knows his Lord” (*man ‘arafa nafsahu fa-qad ‘arafa rabbahu*).

⁷⁴ Molé’s edition has *anā u‘allimukum bi-llāhi wa-ukhikum mina llāhi*, lit. “I teach you about God and I act as your friend from God’s side” (?). Only the first part of this Prophetic *ḥadīth* is canonical. See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:15. In my translation, I prefer to follow the standard wording, preserved inter alia by ‘Abd b. Ḥamīd (d. 249/863), *al-Muntakhab min musnad ‘Abd b. Ḥamīd*, ed. Ṣ. al-Sāmmarā’ī and M. al-Ṣa‘īdī (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), 435: *u‘allimukum bi-llāhi wa-akhshākum lahu*, from which the corrupted version *aḥyākum* in the MS Leiden (f. 132a, l. 10) is perhaps derived. The same meaning, which neatly fits the context of Nasafī’s discussion (cf. the discussion of *khashiyat* and *maḥabbat* in the

comprehending he becomes, he must be on his guard toward the outside, lest he say or do something without proper etiquette, respect and reverence. He must [also] be on his guard toward the inside, lest he conceive of an idea without proper etiquette, respect and reverence. The closer he comes [to comprehension], the more he must be on his guard, until [finally] he reaches a station in which he is constantly present-minded [*ḥāḍir*] and not [p. 206] absent-minded [*ghāyib*], not even for one second. If [then] he is absent-minded for the twinkling of an eye and one word is said [by him] or a movement is made while he is not present-minded, he is called to account and is reproved. THE GOOD ACTIONS OF INNOCENTS ARE THE EVIL DEEDS OF THOSE WHO ARE BROUGHT NEAR.⁷⁵

This is the “presence” of the Sufis [*ḥuḍūr-i ahl-i taṣawwuf*]; this is the station of fear [*maqām-i khashiyat*]; this is the station of love [*maqām-i maḥabbat*]. Fear and love are connected; both come after [the station of] knowledge [*ilm*]. On account of this, he said: THE PUREHEARTED ARE IN GREAT DANGER.⁷⁶ Every Sufi who does not reach this station, has not had a whiff of Sufism, imagining [instead] that Sufism is about prostrating oneself in prayer and pronouncing blessings. O you helpless one, who have remained far from [this] station, for the station of Sufism is indeed a high station! A person who does not know himself, how shall he know what prostrating and pronouncing blessings is about?

O dervish, in as much as man reaches higher levels, he becomes more comprehending and present-minded, and things become more difficult for him. [304] This is why, in the beginning, Adam was told: “Inhabit this second paradise but do not approach the tree of compoundedness. For in as much as you reach higher levels, things will become more difficult for you.” When he reached the third paradise, again he was addressed: “O Adam, inhabit this third paradise, but do not approach the tree of reason!” And when he reached the fourth paradise, he was addressed: “O Adam, now that in [your] ascension you have reached the tree of reason, have become legally responsible and charged with commanding good and forbidding wrong, apply yourself like a man and continue on your path! For to remain stationary on the path, that is not what men [*mardān*] do. Pass beyond these hells and paradises, do not focus on any of the good things, do not let yourself be bound to anything. Neither must you run away from bad things or let yourself be held back from the path, for these good and bad things lead you, nourished in the shadow and the sun, to resemble the angels. However, in my answer to them [the angels] I said: ‘I know something that you know not.’⁷⁷ So strive and exert yourself! Do not stand still on the path until the day you reach the light of God. When you have reached the light of God, you will know yourself and you will know Me, and you will have been honoured by meeting Me [*bi-liqā-yi man musharraf shudī*]. When you are honoured by meeting Me, you will have reached the true paradise, and your comprehension will have reached perfection. When you find Me [*ma-rā yāftī*], you will have found both worlds [i.e. this world and the otherworld], and you will comprehend all things, in such a way that nothing in the World of Dominion [*mulk*], the World of Sovereignty [*malakūt*], and the World of Might [*jabarūt*] shall remain veiled from you. Paradise is no other than this paradise, and pleasure is no other than this pleasure.

[p. 207] The “fall” of Adam and Eve (from their primordial unity with God to the condition of *mizāj*) is presented here as leading over into a recovery and gradual return to God, the ascent of the human individual from rational (*‘aql*) to ethical (*khuluq*), knowledge-based (*‘ilm*) and mystical (*nūr*) modes of existence to the station of the direct encounter (*liqā*) with God. As in the thought of the

following paragraph), is found in al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā l-ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. M. ‘A. ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1411/1990), 1:647: *u‘allimukum bi-llāhi wa-atqākum lahu*.

⁷⁵ A saying attributed to al-Junayd (d. 298/910). See al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-tanzīl*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh al-Nimr (Riyadh: Dār Ṭība, 1417/1997), 7:297.

⁷⁶ Attributed to Dhū l-Nūn (d. 245/860). See al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-īmān*, 5:345: *al-nās kulluhum mawtā illā l-‘ulamā’, wa-l-‘ulamā’ kulluhum niyāmūn illā l-‘āmilūn, wa-l-‘āmilūn kulluhum yaḡtarrūna illā l-mukhlīṣīna* [sic], *wa-l-mukhlīṣīna ‘alā khaṭarin ‘azīmin*. Also quoted, without reference to Dhū l-Nūn, in al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 28:85.

⁷⁷ A reference to Qur’ān 2:30, where God says to the angels: “I know what you know not,” in response to their questioning God’s wisdom in placing man on earth as His steward (*khalīfa*).

Khurāsānian mystic Aḥmad al-Samʿānī (d. 534/1140), Adam's fall thus appears as an act of divine mercy and as the source of his self-knowledge.⁷⁸ However, in Nasafi's account, at no point in this journey is paradise "lost"; there are merely degrees of perfection and felicity that man can achieve. The human progress through the stations of character/good behavior (*khuluq*, *akhlāq-i nīk*), rational knowledge/intellection (*ʿilm*, *idrāk*), and gnosis (*maʿrifat*) is discussed in detail: the felicity one finds at the station of gnosis is greater because of man's increased overall comprehension (*dānish*) of things, but the danger of lapsing increases by the same token. This danger requires the wayfarer to show presence (*ḥudūr*), it instills fear (*khawf*) and is tempered by love (*maḥabbat*). Nasafi's encouragement to the wayfarer to "be a man" recalls 'Aṭṭār's statement in the *Asrār-nāma* that men will only become men once they enter paradise (i.e., in the sense of *al-rujūʿ al-ikhtiyārī*), which, incidentally, is how he explains *ḥadīth*s about the increased potency of men in the afterlife.⁷⁹ By contrast, the angels lack this "manliness", stuck as they are in their ignorance of God's wise purpose. According to Nasafi's *K. al-Tanzīl*, "[m]ulk is the world of sensory existents [*mawjūdāt-i ḥissī*] and *malakūt* is the world of intelligible existents [*mawjūdāt-i aqlī*]," while "God, or *jabarūt*, is real and eternal existence, whereas the world [*mulk* and *malakūt*] have metaphorical and created existence."⁸⁰ According to a later definition, "the domain [*al-mulk*] is the sensory dimension of existence, the dominions [*al-malakūt*] are its inward, intelligible dimension, and the omnipotence [*al-jabarūt*] is the all-enveloping ocean from which both pour forth."⁸¹

O dervish, until the wayfarer has been honoured by meeting God, he cannot comprehend or see anything as it really is. The wayfarer only seeks to comprehend and to see God, and to comprehend and to see His attributes. He who has not seen God, nor come to know His attributes, [305] has come [into the world] not seeing and leaves [the world] a blindman. When the wayfarer reaches God's light, all hardship and struggle has come to an end. He then has reached the station about which God has said: I AM HIS EAR, EYE, HAND, AND TONGUE. HE HEARS BY ME, SEES BY ME, TAKES BY ME, AND SPEAKS BY ME.⁸² He has reached the station about which the Prophet—peace be upon him!—says: BEWARE OF THE [P. 208] *FIRĀSA* OF THE FAITHFUL, FOR HE SEES BY GOD'S LIGHT.⁸³ Now that the wayfarer has reached the light of God, he walks by the light of God, while previously he walked by the light of reason. Reason has come to an end; now he walks by the light of God. The light of God facilitates travel by lifting all veils of light and darkness in front of the wayfarer, so that the wayfarer sees God and knows Him. That is, the light of God reaches the ocean of light, and he sees the ocean of light. It is by His light that one can see His light and know Him.

O dervish, this is the eighth paradise. In the opinion of this helpless one, this is the last paradise; next to these eight, there is no other paradise. Some, however, say that in addition to these eight paradises, there is another paradise, that in this paradise there is a tree, and that the name of this tree is "power" [*qudrat*]. When the wayfarer reaches the light of God and when he is honoured by meeting God, he reaches the vision of certitude [*ʿayn al-yaqīn*]. That is, until now, he knew by the knowledge of certitude [*ʿilm al-yaqīn*], but now he sees by the vision of certitude, that existence belongs to God, and that there is not an atom in the cosmos that does not share in its essence in the light of God, that does not envelop it and is not aware of it. The wayfarer detaches himself from his own existence, he gives [his] existence away, leaving pride and conceit behind.

[306] O dervish, the wayfarer will not and cannot free himself of illusion and conceit unless he passes beyond these numerous veils of darkness and of light. When he frees himself of illusion and conceit, and knows with certainty that [all] this is mere appearance

⁷⁸ See al-Samʿānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmāʾ al-malik al-fattāḥ*, ed. Najib Māyil Harawī (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ʿilmī wa-Farhangī, 1368/1989), and the discussion by William Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 141-77.

⁷⁹ See Ritter, *Meer*, 187.

⁸⁰ See Ridgeon, 'Azīz Nasafi, 21.

⁸¹ Ibn ʿAjība, *Mīʾrāj al-tashawwuf ilā ḥaqāʾiq al-taṣawwuf*, tr. M. F. Aresmouk and M. A. Fitzgerald, *The Book of Ascension* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011), 48.

⁸² Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:2384.

⁸³ Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. A. M. Shākir (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 5:298.

[*zāhir*], that it all is [nothing but] the Niche [of Light],⁸⁴ then he reaches God Himself. When he reaches God Himself and gives away his own existence, He brings the wayfarer into existence [*ḥast gardānad*] by His own existence, and adorns him with His own attributes. Then everything the wayfarer says is said by God, and everything he does is done by God. The wayfarer becomes wise and able, and possessed of power and spiritual energy [*himmat*]. YOU DID NOT SLAY THEM, BUT GOD SLEW THEM; AND WHEN YOU SHOT [ARROWS], IT WAS NOT YOURSELF THAT SHOT, BUT GOD SHOT.⁸⁵

In this section Nasafī describes the pinnacle of the Sufi path, the spiritual station in which the Sufi lifts himself over his base attributes and assumes God's attributes, until he completely lives in God and acts through Him. This is expressed by the *ḥadīth qudsī* "I am his ear, eye, hand, and tongue," the so-called *ḥadīth al-nawāfil* ("ḥadīth of supererogatory prayers"), one of the "cornerstones of mystical teaching in Sufism."⁸⁶ The Sufi now masters *firāsa* (*Wesensschau*), the art of assaying the inside (*bāṭin*) by observing its outside (*zāhir*), of assessing the inner self by reading the outward traits of a human being, particularly a person's physiognomy. In Sufi terms, as al-Kattānī (d. 322/934) puts it, *firāsa* is "an unveiling of the truth and a vision of the unseen."⁸⁷ As such, *firāsa* was often attributed to [p. 209] Sufi masters.⁸⁸ At the end of this section, Nasafī introduces the pivotal concept of *himmat*, "spiritual energy." *Himmat* indicates the power (*qudrat*) of certain saints to "create" effects in the world of sense perception (*mulk*), by virtue of having become similar (*tashabbuh*) to the Creator. Ibn al-ʿArabī attributes this miracle-mongering capacity to the "Perfect Man" (*al-insān al-kāmil*).⁸⁹ In the following section, Nasafī gives his own view of the matter, although he is careful not to claim *himmat* for himself.⁹⁰

However, the understanding of this helpless one does not reach as far as this ninth paradise. This is because I myself have not seen anything of this ninth paradise that this group talks about. Neither have I seen [anything] among my contemporaries. There is a lot, however, that I have heard.

Know that some say that there are people whose every wish God fulfils. Everything that must be, according to them, comes to be. Everything upon which they fix their spiritual energy comes to be exactly according to their spiritual energy. MANY A DISHEVELED, DUST-COLORED ONE DRESSED IN TWO RAGS,⁹¹ WERE HE TO ENTREAT GOD, HE WOULD GRANT IT.⁹² That is, they possess knowledge, power, and spiritual resolve to perfection, and they obtain all that they desire [307] and everything is as they want it to be. This is because they have died a voluntary death before the natural death. They have left this world and entered the otherworld. For example, when this group of people want it to rain, in the moment when it occurs to them in their mind, clouds appear and it begins to rain. If they do not want it to rain, in the moment when it occurs to them in their mind, it stops raining and the clouds disappear. If they want people to fall ill, immediately they do. If they want a sick person to recover, this person recovers immediately. It is like this with all things. They also say that these people travel in one hour from the east to the west and that in one hour they return from the west to the east. If they want, they walk over water, fly through the air, and go through fire. If they want, people see them, and if they want, they do not see them. Every

⁸⁴ Cf. Qurʾān 24:35: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp."

⁸⁵ Qurʾān 8:17.

⁸⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 43.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Ibn ʿAjība, *Mīrāj al-tashawwuf*, tr. Aresmouk/Fitzgerald, 25.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Ruzbihān-i Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i shathīyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin, *Commentaire sur les paradoxes des Soufis* (Tehran: Qismat-i Īrānshīnāsī, Institut Īrān wa-Farānsah, 1966), no. 588.

⁸⁹ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:385, 12.

⁹⁰ On *himmat* in Nasafī's work and in that of other seventh-/thirteenth-century Sufi authors, cf. Ridgeon, *ʿAzīz Nasafī*, 159-67.

⁹¹ One should read *dhū ṭimraynī*, as in MS Leiden (f. 133a, l. 11), not *dhū zahraynī* as in ed. Molé, 306.20.

⁹² Versions of this *ḥadīth* circulated widely, but the exact wording seems peculiar to al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān*, 7:333. Cf. the slightly different version in al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:692.

day, their sustenance comes to them prepared and ready [for consumption].

It has been related that the prophet Moses, when he came to befriend Khidr—peace be upon them!—, traveled together [with him] on the road. They became hungry. A gazelle appeared and stood in between the two. Khidr’s side was roasted, but Moses’s side was raw. Khidr began to eat. Moses, however, could not eat. Khidr said: “O Moses, collect fire wood, roast the meat [308] and eat!” Moses asked Khidr: “How is it that your side is roasted, while my side is raw?” Khidr responded: “O Moses, I am in the otherworld, but you are in this world. Sustenance in this world is something that must be acquired [*muktasab ast*], but sustenance in the otherworld is [already] prepared and ready [p. 210] [*mustafrih*]. The world is the abode of work; the otherworld is the abode of reward. Our sustenance comes [to us] ready and prepared, while your sustenance depends on effort and striving.”

WHENEVER ZACHARIAH WENT IN TO HER IN THE SANCTUARY, HE FOUND HER PROVISIONED. “MARY,” HE SAID, “HOW COMES THIS TO YOU?” “FROM GOD,” SHE SAID. “TRULY GOD PROVISIONS WHOMSOEVER HE WILL WITHOUT RECKONING.”⁹³ This and things that are like it they relate about the ninth heaven.

O dervish, today as I write this, I do not have this [power], and my friends likewise do not have it. And yet, it is impossible to deny [the truth of] this. Perchance God Exalted will grant it to us, for He is All-Powerful. For now, what appears to us is this: the power of [common] people, if they are granted it, is to facilitate [*tawānā gardad*] the norms of the Law [*amr-u nahy-i shari‘at*] that have come [to us] from God through the intermediary of the prophets and the Friends [of God], by following what is commanded and steering clear of what is forbidden. Likewise, what we know and have arrived at is that the nobility [*karāmat*] of the human being consists in the knowledge [*‘ilm*] of God and in praiseworthy manners. Whoever has accumulated knowledge and [good] manners has [achieved] greater nobility and moved closer to the presence of God.

O dervish, know that humans, whether king or commoner, prophet or follower, knowledgeable or ignorant, are incapable and helpless. They live in deprivation, except in those moments when, by the divine decree, they reach perfection in [the state of] satisfaction [*riḍā*]. The prophets [309], Friends [of God], kings and sultans in most instances want many things to be that are not, and want many things not to be that are. GOD ALONE DECIDES,⁹⁴ and in this way He rules over the worlds of *mulk*, *malakūt*, and *jabarūt*. Besides, a person’s desire and deception are not always the same as that which is beneficial for him or not. IT MAY HAPPEN THAT YOU WILL HATE A THING WHICH IS BETTER FOR YOU; AND IT MAY HAPPEN THAT YOU WILL LOVE A THING WHICH IS WORSE FOR YOU.⁹⁵

PRAISE BE TO GOD, THE LORD OF ALL BEING.

In Ibn al-‘Arabī’s doctrine of the afterlife (in the sense of *al-rujū‘ al-iḍṭirārī*), all inward qualities and desires appear to the resurrected in an outward, “imaginal” form. For example, mystical knowledge attaches itself to the imaginal body of a saint in the form of a bright light,⁹⁶ or is drunk in the form of milk, honey, or wine by the inhabitants of paradise.⁹⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabī states that man’s every desire comes into existence (albeit in the imaginal world, the *‘ālam al-khayāl*) according to his own will. As noted above, Ibn al-‘Arabī also teaches—and in this he is followed, cautiously, by Nasafī—that the saints in this world *already* have the power to bring everything they desire into physical existence. As Chittick notes, this is “a kind of anticipation of their paradisiacal state,” a fact that “does not seem to [p. 211] have been pointed out” by earlier scholars.⁹⁸ The legend of Khidr, Moses, and the half-roasted gazelle appears in in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s (d. 386/998) *Qūt al-qulūb* and in al-Qushayrī’s (d.

⁹³ Qur’ān 3:37.

⁹⁴ I am unable to trace this saying (*tafarrada ḥaqqun bi-hukm*) to a particular source. Cf., however, the statement of al-Qushayrī that “God alones creates” (*tafarrada l-ḥaqqu bi-l-ibdā‘ wa-l-jād*). See al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-ishārāt*, ed. I. Basyūnī (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī, 1968), 2:497.

⁹⁵ Qur’ān 2:216.

⁹⁶ Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:296,10.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1:306,13, 2:311,14, 4:418,3.

⁹⁸ Chittick, “Death and the World of Imagination,” 71n39.

465/1072) *Risāla*.⁹⁹ In both accounts, Khidr's unquestioning reliance on God (*tawakkul*) is stressed.¹⁰⁰ Nasafi "updates" the story to emphasize the aspect of *himmat*. Khidr is preceded in his ability to eat the food of paradise while still on earth by the Prophet Muḥammad, whom tradition credits with having eaten the "grapes of paradise" during prayer.¹⁰¹ A number of Sufis also boasted that they had eaten the fruit of paradise on earth.¹⁰²

[p. 212] Primary sources

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¹⁰⁰ Cf. Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 2000), 196-97.

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